

USMC Plan for Information Technology Management

By U.S. Marine Corps Col. Paul Hilton

Background

Responsibility and authority over all aspects of information technology (IT), including requirements definitions, procurement and governance, are influenced by an organization's traditions and business processes. Certainly within the Department of Defense (DOD), the Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution (PPBE) process governs all investments including IT. It was developed to acquire capabilities based on the National Military Strategy. However, IT procurement is further influenced by the expectations of legislation such as the Clinger-Cohen Act, Information Resources Management Act and Paperwork Reduction Act. Each of these elements, historical processes and more recent legislation, require the services and U.S. government agencies to organize processes and offices to assure appropriate acquisition and management of IT resources.

The Marine Corps serves as an example of how one military service is adapting its organizations to meet both the mandates of the PPBE process and the broad requirements of the Clinger-Cohen Act in the management of IT. This article will look at how the Marine Corps organizes its resources to procure and manage IT capabilities, and it will highlight some important IT goals that the Director, Command, Control, Communications and Computers (C4) has identified in the C4 Campaign Plan.

Organization

First, it is important to recall that the Marine Corps is organized as a separate military service within the Department of the Navy (DON). Accordingly, the Marine Corps is assigned statutory roles, responsibilities and authorities by U.S. Code Title 10, to "organize, train and equip" the active and reserve forces. These responsibilities, while done in coordination with the Navy where appropriate, are separate military service responsibilities under the Secretary of the Navy. Accordingly, the landscape of authorities and organizations affecting Marine Corps IT can be viewed from two perspectives: one is an upward or the DON organizational view; the other is an internal or Marine Corps view.

In conjunction with the authority given the DON Chief Information Officer (CIO), the services still maintain separate responsibilities for IT governance. In recognition of the existing service authorities and to assist the DON CIO, the Secretary of the Navy appointed the Marine Corps Director of C4 to be the Deputy DON CIO (Marine Corps). Likewise, he has made a similar designation for the Navy. The Deputy DON CIO (Marine Corps) is responsible to the DON CIO (as well as to the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC)) for Clinger-Cohen activities and governance for the Marine Corps.

The DON CIO tasked his two service deputies to conduct IT Capital Planning and Portfolio Management to develop an information

management/information technology (IM/IT) architecture, manage the IM/IT workforce, and provide leadership and governance of IM/IT activities. This relationship with the DON CIO allows the Marine Corps flexibility to make IT management decisions based on our unique warfighting requirements, but with a close eye to interoperability and integration with naval IT. Viewing the Marine Corps internally, there are several other organizational entities with IT responsibilities and stakeholders within the IT enterprise. There are three primary organizations that have assigned responsibilities for leadership and governance of IT:

Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) C4 – Plans, directs, coordinates and oversees C4 and IT capabilities that support warfighting functions.

Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC) – Ensures that all warfighting capabilities are integrated across the spectrum of Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel and Facilities (DOTMLPF) to produce integrated capabilities based on warfighting concepts, and to provide required capabilities to the operating forces and regional combatant commanders.

Marine Corps Systems Command (MARCORSYSCOM) – Serves as the Commandant's principal agent for acquisition and sustainment of systems and equipment used by the operating forces to accomplish their warfighting mission. Participates in DON Research, Development and Acquisition (RDA) "Virtual SYSCOM" efforts in conjunction with the systems commands: Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA), Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) and the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR). Other organizations and chartered boards and stakeholders in the processes of IT management include the following.

Marine Corps Warfighting Lab (MCWL) – Chartered under MCCDC to improve naval expeditionary warfighting capabilities across the spectrum of conflict for current and future operating forces.

Marine Corps Operational Test and Evaluation Activity (MCOTEA) – Responsible for the operational testing of all Marine Corps weapon systems and equipment (except for those that involve aircraft) to ensure that Marines in the operating forces receive the best possible weapon systems and equipment to successfully fulfill their warfighting mission.

Marine Corps Tactical Systems Support Activity (MCTSSA) – Provides technical support to the Commander, MARCORSYSCOM, and program managers to acquire and sustain C4ISR products for the operating forces.

Marine Corps Network Operations and Security Command

(MCNOSC) – Provides 24/7 enterprise support for the following “core” functions: information assurance, network operations, computer network defense, deployed support and network security.

Marine Requirements Oversight Counsel (MROC) – Advises the CMC on policy matters related to defining and validating requirements, reviewing major force structure initiatives and concepts validation.

MROC Review Board – Reviews topics and makes recommendations, and is a subordinate guiding body to the MROC.

Advocates – provide broad-based experience and direct representation to the MROC for each element of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) and supporting establishment. Each advocate chairs an Advocacy Board and has several subordinate Operational Advisory Groups (OAG) that provide recommendations to the advocates on various topics including IT capabilities and requirements. For instance, the Director C4 chairs the C4 OAG, which is subordinate to the Command Element Advisory Board (CEAB). This forum allows the Director C4 to address long term, broad strategic issues with members of the C4 community, as well as short-term issues that have an operational impact. The C4 OAG provides input and recommendations to the CEAB, and the other advocates, by consulting and conferencing with the operating forces’ Command Information Officers (G6s).

(As this article was written the Marine Corps concepts and process for advocates and advocacy were changing. In fact, the specific title of advocate is being dropped and different titles and roles for the former advocates are being worked. However, for IT, in many respects, the functional oversight role that advocates have traditionally held will continue. It is expected that former advocates will continue to exercise overall leadership and governance over a set of functional managers.)

Functional Area Managers (FAMS) – Provide overall IT governance for an advocate in a specific functional area. Certainly one of the major objectives for the Navy and the Marine Corps is the development of a capability-based portfolio. In pursuing this objective, the Marine Corps is building its IT portfolio to enable business and warfighting missions; reduce legacy applications through standardization and version control; and minimize duplication on the desktop and servers.

To accomplish this the Marine Corps has assigned FAMs with responsibilities for managing functional portfolios. Each FAM performs the portfolio management duties under the authority of a Marine Corps advocate. Marine Corps FAM efforts must be in concert with the role of the advocates especially from a requirements and resourcing perspective. The FAM assignments are the clearest example of the melding of the more traditional Marine Corps approach to PPBE and the less traditional Clinger-Cohen activities within the DON.

The C4 Campaign Plan

The Director C4 is responsible for setting the IT strategic direction, goals and objectives for IT. The seminal document publishing this vision is the C4 Campaign Plan. The Campaign Plan is

helpful for providing high level IT direction and priorities for all Marine Corps entities with IT responsibilities whether they manage existing capabilities or procure future capabilities. The C4 Campaign Plan is updated roughly every two years. It outlines the Marine Corps linkages to the DON-wide IT goals and objectives stated in the DON IM/IT Strategic Plan. It also outlines IT support to overall Marine Corps strategy as expressed in documents such as the Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare concept, Marine Corps 21 and CMC Planning Guidance.

The Campaign Plan is helpful for our industry partners because it describes what the Marine Corps IT environment is and, more broadly, what capabilities are required. Marine Corps IT capabilities need to be “edge” focused and expeditionary because of the nature of the Marine Corps mission. The normal Marine Corps environment consists of forward-based operations with constrained bandwidth, harsh climates and limited physical space for IT equipment. Equipment must be vehicle mounted or portable and capable of embarking via amphibious maritime prepositioned shipping or military airlift.

Further, the C4 Campaign Plan directs that procured IT systems must be able to operate where power is unreliable and supporting infrastructure is limited. Systems must be highly mobile, modular; capable of beyond line-of-sight; easy to install, operate and maintain; less manpower intensive; more user friendly; integrated and open standards-based; jointly interoperable; and designed with built-in security.

Beyond these stipulations regarding the operating environment, the C4 Campaign Plan describes a vision for a Marine Corps information environment that is “synchronized from the ground up to facilitate network integration and interoperability across the Marine Corps Enterprise Network (MCEN).” To that end, five actionable objectives were identified. They are: (1) Develop Marine Corps Enterprise IT Services (MCEITS), a Services Oriented Architecture (SOA) that is complementary but not duplicative of Net-Centric Enterprise Services; (2) Web-enable the Marine Corps; (3) Create a shared data environment; (4) Leverage innovation; and (5) Conduct network operations.

A revised C4 Campaign Plan is in the works, but certainly the main tenets mentioned above will not change. It will build upon the good work that has already been accomplished and point the way ahead. This article has described the general Marine Corps organization for the management of IT within the DON. It has mentioned the more prominent organizations and authorities that have input into the Marine Corps IT portfolio of capabilities. Finally, it has given a sampling of some of the characteristics expected of fielded IT systems from the C4 Campaign Plan.

The Marine Corps has melded together a flexible organization to provide IT capabilities within the PPBE process and the Clinger-Cohen mandates under the supervision of both the Commandant of the Marine Corps and the Secretary of the Navy.

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